

# Committee on Resources

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## TESTIMONY OF KENNETH B. STANSELL

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS REGARDING THE INTERNATIONAL  
ASPECTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

April 29, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) role in the international conservation of fish and wildlife species. The Service appreciates the continued interest and commitment by this Subcommittee to protect and conserve threatened and endangered species throughout the world.

As members of the Subcommittee are aware, the Service has a long history of proactive programs addressing the international conservation of fish and wildlife species. The Service works with private citizens, local communities, state and federal agencies, foreign governments, and nongovernmental organizations, to promote a coordinated domestic and international strategy to protect, restore, and enhance the world's diverse wildlife and their habitats. My testimony today will highlight two key components of those programs: regulation of international wildlife trade through implementation of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and providing direct support to on-the-ground conservation programs in developing countries through a series of grant programs including the Multinational Species Conservation Fund and our Wildlife Without Borders Program.

### CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

I appreciate the opportunity to update the Subcommittee on the U.S. preparations for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). COP13 will take place in Bangkok, Thailand from October 2-October 14 of this year.

CITES, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2003, is the only international treaty designed specifically to control, monitor and regulate international trade in certain animal and plant species that are now or may be potentially threatened with extinction. CITES is one of the most effective forces in the world today for conservation of fauna and flora, both in halting the trade in species which are threatened with extinction and in fostering sustainable trade in other vulnerable species. CITES is a treaty that works and is gaining momentum as reflected by the continued expansion of this treaty's membership. Currently, 164 countries, including the United States, are Parties to CITES.

As the Subcommittee is aware, the Convention established a formal process for considering changes to the species covered by the Convention through periodic meetings of the Parties. Any Party may submit proposed species changes and other agenda items for consideration at meetings of the COP through this process. In preparation for the upcoming COP13, the Service has coordinated with the Departments of Commerce, State and Agriculture; the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and state agencies. The Service has published a series of Federal Register notices, and held public meetings, in which we solicited comments regarding possible species proposals, resolutions, decisions, and agenda items that the United States should consider proposing at the next meeting. The public comment period on the latest Federal Register notice closed on March 12, 2004. That notice presented a summary of comments received and outlined proposals that were likely to be submitted.

In considering U.S. proposals, the Service will prioritize submissions to maximize the Convention's effectiveness in the conservation and sustainable use of species subject to international trade. This includes proposed actions that specifically address:

- serious wildlife trade issues that the U.S. is experiencing as a range country for species in trade, or for those species not native to the U.S.;
- difficulties encountered by the U.S., or other Parties, in implementing or interpreting the Convention; and
- implementation of the Convention by increasing the information quality and expertise used to support

decisions by the parties.

The Service is currently completing its consultations and will formally transmit its final proposals to the CITES Secretariat by May 5, 2004. At that time, we will also begin working on our draft negotiating positions for species and other agenda items proposed by other Parties. We anticipate publishing those draft positions in the Federal Register in July 2004, for public review and comment prior to the meeting.

We anticipate that Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Mr. Craig Manson will again head the delegation, which will be comprised of technical staff from the Department of the Interior, the Service, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), NOAA Fisheries, USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS), U.S. Forest Service, State Department, and USTR.

Of the numerous issues to be addressed at COP13 below are several that we would like to highlight.

#### Whales

We anticipate that there will be several proposals dealing with whales. This is a very contentious issue that has a long history within CITES. Proposals to downlist stocks of both Bryde's whales and minke whales from Appendix I to II by Japan have been defeated at the last four CITES meetings. If adopted, these proposals would re-open international commercial trade in whale products, and could foster increased poaching of protected whale species. The United States continues to be strongly opposed to the downlisting of whale species in accordance with the commercial whaling moratorium of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). We believe that CITES should honor the request for assistance in enforcing the moratorium which was communicated by the IWC to CITES in 1978. We continue to participate in the IWC efforts to develop a Revised Management Scheme (RMS) that includes an effective inspection and observation scheme for use in the event that the moratorium on commercial whaling is lifted.

#### Elephants

Trade in African elephant parts and products has been another contentious issue. In the spring of 1989, concern that African elephant populations were being devastated to supply a largely illegal ivory trade resulted in major importing countries, including the U.S. and the European Union, to declare a moratorium on ivory imports. At COP12, because of successful management strategies, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, were permitted to conduct a one-time sale of registered government stockpiles of ivory, no earlier than May 2004. This one-time sale is subject to certain additional specific conditions including an expanded and operational Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) program, which is designed to provide a baseline of elephant populations and ongoing monitoring. The United States continues to work with other delegations to ensure that the conditions of any sale of ivory included effective safeguards to prevent adverse impacts on elephant populations in other countries.

#### Humphead Wrasse

The United States will likely submit a proposal to list humphead wrasse to Appendix II as a result of continued illegal and unsustainable trade, lack of coordinated management, a vulnerable life history, and the prominence of international markets. Researchers remain concerned over the status of the humphead wrasse because of its importance as a luxury food item and a high market value that is predicted to rise with increasing rarity of the species, thus encouraging continued exploitation as stocks continue to decline. The United States submitted a proposal to list the species in Appendix II at COP12, and, although it garnered a majority of votes, it failed to gain the required two-thirds majority. Results of recent research on the effects of trade on the status of the species should help support re-submission. Fiji may be a possible co-sponsor of the proposal.

#### Bald Eagle

Since the bald eagle is no longer listed as "endangered" under U.S. law and no longer subject to significant levels of trade, the United States may submit a proposal to transfer this species from Appendix I to Appendix II. Bald eagle populations have grown rapidly throughout much of their range. Populations continue to grow (there were an estimated 6,471 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states in 2000). Since CITES provisions only address international trade, the proposed amendment to the Appendices would likely have little or no effect on additional protections for the bald eagle.

We manage the largely non-commercial demand for this species (ceremonial uses by U.S. and Canadian indigenous peoples) through our National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repository which collects bald eagle corpses and parts from across the country for eventual distribution to federally recognized U.S. Native American tribes through a permitting process. There is also some international demand for Native American artifacts made with eagle feathers for specialty collectors and as curios and this trade would still be controlled under an Appendix-II listing. Moreover, there are several other federal and state laws and regulations that protect bald eagles in addition to the Endangered Species Act, such as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The bald eagle is also protected under bilateral treaties between the United States and other countries, including Canada, for the conservation of migratory birds.

## Bobcat

Finally we may propose the removal of bobcat from the CITES Appendices. Bobcat was listed in CITES Appendix II in 1977 and has been kept on Appendix II because of the similarity of appearance of its pelts (and products manufactured from those pelts) to those of other small spotted cat species listed in Appendix I or II. The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries have now requested that the bobcat be removed from the Appendices. We are investigating the consequences of removing the bobcat from the CITES Appendices on the conservation of other protected small spotted cats, particularly the Canada lynx, European lynx, and Iberian lynx. We are also seeking input from the other two bobcat range countries (Canada and Mexico), and from countries where lynx species occur to determine if management and enforcement controls in range countries are adequate to nullify look-alike concerns. We also continue to consult closely with State fish and wildlife agencies. Removal from Appendix II is supported by Canada but opposed by Mexico and the EU. While the success of this proposal is doubtful, we believe it may be useful to draw attention to the lack of progress in addressing identification and trade control problems that have required the listing of this species as a look-alike for 25 years.

## MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND AND WILDLIFE WITHOUT BORDERS

The Service currently administers the Multinational Species Conservation Fund that includes the African Elephant Conservation Act, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act, the Asian Elephant Conservation Act, the Great Apes Conservation Act and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. These programs provide technical and cost-sharing grant assistance to range countries for conservation of the respective species and their habitats. With regards to African elephants, Asian elephants, Rhinoceros and Tigers and Great Apes, the Service has funded 559 conservation grants in 46 countries. Approximately \$25 million in funds appropriated by the U.S. Congress has leveraged more than \$80 million in matching and in-kind contributions from about 500 partner organizations. With regards to neotropical migratory birds, the Service has funded 69 projects in 28 countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Approximately \$6 million appropriated by Congress has leveraged more than \$26 million in matching funds. Attached to our testimony is a history of the programs under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund.

The Service works closely with foreign governments and local and international conservation organizations to identify and support high-priority actions to protect these species and their habitats. Our experience has shown that relatively modest sums, if judiciously applied to well-designed and implemented projects, can leverage considerable resources and, just as importantly, the interest of communities, governments, and the world. As a direct result of funds made available by the Multinational Species Conservation Acts, in-country wildlife researchers and managers are more effectively protecting their country's wildlife and habitat resources. On behalf of rhinoceroses, tigers, and Asian elephants, we have been one of the leaders in helping range countries address the problems affecting the continued existence of these animals. The decade-long implementation of the African Elephant Conservation Act in Africa has played a significant role in U.S. efforts to encourage and assist on-the-ground projects aimed at conserving elephants.

The Service also coordinates these overseas activities with USAID, which manages a \$155 million per year program in conservation and management of biological diversity and forests that links species preservation and habitat management with economic development.

The following are examples of projects that have been supported by Multinational Species Conservation Funds:

- African Elephants - Assistance with control of pressure from a diverse array of elephant poachers and to institute a coordinated system for monitoring elephant (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*) populations and the traffic of illegal elephant products, such as ivory and bushmeat. (2002)
- Asian Elephants - Assistance on the Island of Borneo in Malaysia for conservation of elephants and their habitat, and conduct of elephant-human conflict mitigation activities in the vicinity of the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary. (2003)
- Great Apes - Ground surveys for chimpanzee and western lowland gorilla populations and capacity building among local people surrounding this conservation area in northern Republic of Congo. (2001)
- Neotropical Migratory Birds –Restoration of about 500 acres of marsh within Palo Verde National Park in Costa Rica. This marsh was once the most important wintering area for waterfowl in Central America, including thousands of blue-winged teal and potentially over a hundred additional species of neotropical migrants. (2002)
- Rhinoceros and Tigers –
  - o GIS capacity building of the Cambodia Tiger Team and development of a Cambodia Spatial Tiger Information System. (2001)
  - o Ear notching of Black Rhinos on Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and Sweetwaters Rhino Sanctuary. (2002)

Recently, the Service testified in support of the Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2003, H.R. 3378. H.R.

3378 addresses some of the most urgent conservation issues regarding marine turtles and would assist current recovery and protection efforts by supporting and providing financial resources for projects designed to conserve marine turtles and their nesting habitat in foreign countries, such as the sea turtle camps in Mexico. Modeled after existing programs within the Fund, H.R. 3378 would serve as a flexible funding source for global turtle conservation activities.

Work done through the Multinational Species Conservation Fund is complemented by the Service's Wildlife Without Borders Programs. While the Multinational Species Conservation Fund focuses on particular species, Wildlife Without Borders addresses broader needs that must be met for overall success in wildlife conservation. The goal of the Wildlife Without Borders Program is to develop locally adapted wildlife management and conservation programs to maintain global species diversity. Efforts include in-country capacity building, bolstering management of natural areas, educating communities on endangered and migratory species conservation, and developing public pride in wildlife. Wildlife Without Borders initiatives are underway in five geographic regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico, India, Russia and China.

In 2003, Wildlife Without Borders awarded 73 grants in 18 countries. The U.S. contribution of \$1.48 million leveraged \$5.43 million in matching and in-kind contributions from foreign governments, international conservation organizations, private businesses and community leaders.

The following are examples of projects supported by funds from the Wildlife Without Borders program:

- Latin America and the Caribbean – Partnered with the Department of State to hold the Western Hemisphere Migratory Birds Conference. The Conference successfully brought together representatives from 25 countries in the Western Hemisphere and over 40 international non-government conservation groups to develop cooperation on conservation of migratory species and collaboration on wildlife conservation issues.
- Russia – Grants program instituted in 1995 has provided more than \$600,000 to enhance law enforcement, education activities, and infrastructure for Russian federal nature reserves. These funds have been used to purchase such operational necessities as park station generators, patrol vehicle repairs and fuel and station radios.

Working with our international partners, we see clear signs of the effectiveness of our combined efforts. The Service's work through our Multinational Species Conservation programs serve as a catalyst for cooperative efforts among the governments of the world, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to work together for a common goal, the conservation and continued existence of species. The lessons we learn encourage optimism and help point the way to improved action in a world of increasing threats to wildlife.

In closing Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the other Subcommittee Members for your continuing support of the conservation and protection of threatened and endangered species throughout the world. I would be happy to respond to any questions.